

## RE: length of posts

Von: **kevin galalae** (kgalalae@hotmail.com)  
Gesendet: Mittwoch, 11. November 2009 15:47:09  
An: jsr13@leicester.ac.uk  
Cc: Nick Wright (nw78@leicester.ac.uk)

Dear Dr. Rofo,

I deeply appreciate your reassuring and sympathetic words. Freedom of expression is obviously a respected right at Leicester being, as you have aptly put it, "sacrosanct to the academic experience".

In retrospect, I realize that my email to Nick may have sounded threatening. To dispel this false impression I owe you and Nick an explanation. My father spent 6 years in prison in Romania - the country of my birth - as a political prisoner for daring to insist on exercising his right to free expression and we, his children and wife, suffered along with him. That is why I make no compromises when it comes to ensuring that free expression is upheld as a sacrosanct right here in the West. In light of the fact that it has been eroded and mutilated by political correctness, not to mention by the collusion of various actors of the establishment, it has become especially important for me to see to it that no one - be it a person, an organization or a state - dilutes my right to free expression.

I hope this puts in perspective my recent communications with you and Nick. Sorry I have to cut this email short but my son is calling me and I must run to fulfill my fatherly duties.

Warm regards,

Kevin Galalae

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From: jsr13@leicester.ac.uk  
To: kgalalae@hotmail.com; kmcg1@leicester.ac.uk  
Date: Tue, 10 Nov 2009 17:40:43 +0000  
Subject: RE: length of posts

Apologies,  
with attachment  
Yours  
Simon

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**From:** Rofo, Dr J.S.  
**Sent:** 10 November 2009 17:40  
**To:** kgalalae@hotmail.com; Galalae, K.M.C.  
**Subject:** RE: length of posts

Dear Kevin,

I hope this finds you well. I thought I would drop you a line after your Associate Tutor, Nick Wright, dropped me a line after some correspondence today.

First of all I am sorry to hear of the most unfortunate situation you experienced in your recent studies.

Secondly, I am glad to hear that your experience of our programme has been in total contrast, and the Nick has been instrumental with his 'rare talents' in facilitating discussion in our forums. That in a nutshell is what the AT is there to do - just to facilitate.

Most importantly, I share your concerns over freedom of expression. It is sacrosanct to the academic experience. To state clearly there is no censorship of opinion in these programmes. That said, and as you acknowledge there are parameters in which one has to operate: politeness being one. Another, and a product of Western University experience is a word limit, but these only operate on the e-tivities. Forum posts are not limited. Nick's remarks were merely guidance. We know from research in the field, alongside our experience, that Forum posts work much better in creating dialogue if they are shorter. So if you have a lot to say on a subject, please consider making multiple post in breaking your points up if they are heading well over 500 words. While this will be a challenge, it establishes good practice for yourself, and crucially, makes things easier for your colleagues to comprehend and respond to. To paraphrase the Bard: "brevity is next to godliness". It is a challenge all of us face; students, academics, professors, and I've attached a well-humoured editorial from a slightly different context that puts it all rather succinctly.

As ever, your thoughts are most welcome and I hope you continue to contribute your thoughts and experiences - be they long or short ;)

All the best,  
Simon

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**From:** kevin galalae [kgalalae@hotmail.com]  
**Sent:** 10 November 2009 15:26  
**To:** nw78@leicester.ac.uk  
**Subject:** length of posts

Hi Nick,

I appreciate your comments and directions. What I am about to say is based on painful recent experience and not on the way you have approached the postings in this course.

The requirement that we post within 400-500 words, while well intended, has some unpleasant consequences: (1) it forces brevity and not all subjects are well served by brevity, (2) brevity results in either point format posts or out of context isolated points, and (3) in order to avoid posts that are devoid of necessary qualifications and/or avoid posts that focus on one isolated point within a grand context, the discussion becomes myopic. This being the case, the ensuing discussions within forums that require strict adherence to a word limit become either myopic or superficial.

A different issue is that the length of posts is often used as an excuse to control the content of posts - this, at least, has been my experience. This past summer I took an online course at Oxford and ended up being kicked out of the course because the tutor did not like my socio-political ideas and ideals and, eager to get rid of me, instigated other students with equal axes to grind to complain about the length of my posts. I took issue with this and the ensuing exchanges revealed that the true reason for complaining about the length of my

posts was my socio-political coloring. In other words, the tutor and a few students sought the only legal way to silence me. The university then used that heated dialogue to indict me of having breached netiquette so as to have grounds to expel me from the course. Having fought my expulsion from the course for four months at several levels of adjudication (from the tutor's decision all the way to the Proctors' office), I am soon to launch legal proceedings against Oxford and am also in the process of referring the case to the Equality and Human Rights Commission. The Panel the Proctors' office tasked with rendering a last judgement found the department of continuing education's decision to remove me from the course to have been "disproportionately severe" but did nothing to address the prejudice and double standards behind the decision or to bother with redress.

The point I am trying to make in telling you about this is that I take my right to free expression and to protected academic discourse very seriously. So if my socio-political ideas and ideals should elicit complaints from other students or dislike on your part, I wish to be informed about this early, openly and sincerely. I have no taste for a repeat of the Oxford experience and no energy and resources to fight on two fronts. As long as I know the truth and I know it early, I can withdraw from the forums and allow the prevailing opinion to dictate the dialogue. I may even decide to withdraw from the program altogether since I cannot stomach

Please do not take this as dissatisfaction on my part with either your approach or your style. On both counts I could not be happier. This is simply a measure meant to protect me from a repeat of the Oxford experience. I deem it necessary since institutions in the western world (and Britain is particularly bad in this respect) have a tendency to control the discourse by covertly or indirectly silencing those who do not sing from the establishment's note sheets.

Being from Eastern Europe I have radically different views from Western Europeans and North Americans, but I have no intention of allowing anyone to deny me the right to freely express my ideas, ideals and values. This is vitally important in a world where consensus not force is supposed to be the way to run the world. And consensus reached in the absence of dissenting voices is no consensus at all; it is at best manufactured consent and at worst censorship.

Warm regards,

Kevin Galalae

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Subject: Re:  
To: kgalalae@hotmail.com  
From: nw78@le.ac.uk  
Date: Tue, 10 Nov 2009 08:27:17 +0000

Hi Kevin,

Thanks for your message and I hope the feedback helps.

I hope you don't feel it is too much "weaknesses". As you correctly say, you engage with the topics with great passion which is never bad. I suppose the trick (which we all need, I should add) is to channel the passion within clear well-presented arguments which you more often than not do.

As regards length of postings, the key thing to remember with the online forum is that as a reader there is only so much we as readers can absorb and the 400-500 word length is about the optimum. The validity of the content is not the question, really just the format. It is particular to this type of learning environment so just think of it as an additional skill - again one which all of us, staff and students, have to learn. (I still get it wrong at times!)

Finally, regarding text critiques, the skill we are working on is really the ability to read journal articles which often tend to be about the length of the Huntington, and pinpoint the key arguments as concisely as possible. The skill is to know what to include and what not. I'll have a look at e-tivity 5 as soon as I get back to my computer and answer the specifics of your question then.

Thanks for your messages - the feedback you all give me is invaluable. And as ever thanks for all the great contributions on the discussion forums.

Best wishes and glad you're all feeling better.

Nick  
Sent from my BlackBerry® wireless device

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**From:** kevin galalae <kgalalae@hotmail.com>  
**Date:** Mon, 9 Nov 2009 21:28:59 +0000  
**To:** Nick Wright<nw78@leicester.ac.uk>  
**Subject:**

Hi Nick,

I acknowledge receipt of your comments on my e-tivity 3 and wish to thank you for the thorough analysis and fair evaluation you have rendered. The same goes for the previous e-tivity. You have a very keen eye and have already unveiled all my weaknesses: (1) tendency to lapse into polemical style, (3) sweeping statements and assumptions, (3) long postings. I promise to actively curb these tendencies and address the weaknesses as best I can. To my defence I can only invoke the passionate nature of my personality and the equally passionate nature of the culture that has shaped my personality. Unlike the Anglo-Saxons, we, the Latins, are not very good at hiding our subjectivity and even worse at stripping reason of passion. So please take pity on me if I shall again transgress in these respects.

By the way, I love the course and your style of directing the discussions and deepening the dialogue. You have a rare talent. Thank you.

Warm regards,

Kevin Galalae

P.S. Where is Ali? He seems to have disappeared.